

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

24 May 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Harry S. Truman Building
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey our urgent concerns regarding the continued unlawful imprisonment and severe maltreatment of former Bangladesh Prime Minister and Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Begum Khaleda Zia. Since her politically-motivated incarceration in February 2018, Begum Zia has been held in insolation and in violation of the fundamental principles of the Constitution of Bangladesh and current law, and contrary to universal human rights practices guaranteeing her right to bail and adequate health care. In light of these facts and as Begum Zia's health is rapidly deteriorating, we respectfully request your consideration in urging the Government of Bangladesh to grant her legal right to bail and health treatment without further delay and without restriction.

We are under no illusions that the Bangladesh government's implication of Begum Zia in numerous false cases and its continuing interference in judicial procedures is part of a politically-motivated strategy to weaken—if not destroy completely—opposition voices to its authoritarian, one-party rule. We are appreciative to the U.S. State Department for its recent annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh and its comprehensive detailing of human rights abuses committed by the ruling authorities. With respect to the charges brought against Begum Zia and her subsequent incarceration, we note that the report accurately references “the lack of evidence to support the conviction, suggesting a political ploy to remove the leader of the opposition from the electoral process.”

Mr. Secretary, as the State Department's report notes, the Constitutional and human rights of Begum Zia—as well as those of thousands of Bangladeshi citizens—have been abused and trampled upon at the behest of a ruling party intent on suppressing freedom of speech and the rights of its people. As the United States pursues its strategic interests with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship in the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, we respectfully urge you to consider the ramifications to this strategy when the leader of the country's main opposition party and largest political party is imprisoned under concocted charges, languishes in jail in declining health and under abject conditions, and is denied her legal right to bail and to appropriate medical attention. Democracy and the rule of law are in peril in Bangladesh. Begum Zia's continued imprisonment and denial of rights is symptomatic of the ongoing abuse of authority in our country. It is time for this state of affairs to end.

Following Bangladesh's deeply flawed elections in December 2018, the deterioration of democracy continues to draw the attention of the United States and the international community, which have raised serious concerns regarding the Awami League's abuse of power and human rights. Yet despite these external pressures, the ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and continue its assault on civil liberties and opposition voices.

Mr. Secretary, the release on bail of Begum Zia must be secured immediately—and without delay—in accordance with the law and without restrictions. We strongly urge the United States to use its considerable leverage to advocate for this outcome.

Thank you very much for your consideration and for your support of the people of Bangladesh.

Sincerely,

Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir
Secretary General
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

Jeremiah Baronberg

From: Jeremiah Baronberg
Sent: Monday, July 29, 2019 12:24 PM
To: Jeremiah Baronberg
Subject: Topline News on Bangladesh / July 29, 2019

Topline News on Bangladesh / July 29, 2019

Bangladesh's deeply flawed election on December 30, 2018 was deemed [not free or fair](#) by the global community. Yet international calls for an [independent investigation](#) into widespread irregularities—required under Bangladesh's legal and Constitutional frameworks—have gone unheeded.

In this environment, the international human rights community continues to highlight concerns regarding the Bangladesh government's [choking of dissent and opposition](#) in the country. The U.S. government used a recent [annual bilateral dialogue](#) opportunity to encourage Bangladesh to “redouble efforts on protection of human rights and combating trafficking in persons” and to raise its “concerns over certain provisions of the Digital Security Act.”

Moreover, the continued imprisonment of the opposition party's leader on [politically motivated charges](#) underscores doubts regarding the country's commitment to the rule of law and equal justice.

As you continue to follow these issues, please see the below updates on the dire circumstances people in Bangladesh face:

In recent Congressional hearing testimony, the U.S. State Department's lead interlocutor for the region registered “concerns regarding Bangladesh's December 30 election and the closing of democratic space for political opposition, media, and civil society. We raise our concerns with the Bangladeshi authorities at each opportunity.”

- [Congressional Statement of Ambassador Alice Wells](#), House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee for Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation, Hearing on [U.S. Interests in South Asia and the FY 2020 Budget](#)
- [Joint Statement on U.S.-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue](#), U.S. Department of State

Human Rights Watch reported on Bangladesh's ongoing suppression of free speech where journalists are under “enormous pressure to self-censor or risk arrest. It's an open secret that it is dangerous to express dissent, even in the form of parody...‘You have a culture of fear, an environment of fear’” while news reports lamented that “the international community has offered only mild criticism...meaning things are unlikely to improve in the country without a concerted external effort to bolster transparency and integrity.”

- [Bangladesh's draconian Internet law treats peaceful critics as criminals](#), Human Rights Watch, published in [The Washington Post](#)
- [The sad state of Bangladeshi democracy](#), Asian Correspondent

The Rohingya crisis continues to strain Bangladesh, where the country's foreign affairs minister defended a “controversial proposal as ‘only solution’ despite misgivings of human rights campaigners.”

- [Bangladesh prepares to move Rohingya to island at risk of floods and cyclones](#), The Guardian
- [Bangladesh: Rohingya Face Monsoon Floods, Landslides](#), Human Rights Watch

This material is distributed by Blue Star Strategies on behalf of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Jeremiah Baronberg
Senior Director
Blue Star Strategies, LLC

888 17th Street NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006

(+1) 202-833-1281 office main
(+1) 202-650-5471 office direct
(+1) 202-822-9088 fax

jeremiah.baronberg@bluestarstrategies.com

www.bluestarstrategies.com/



The information in this transmittal is privileged and confidential and is intended only for the recipient(s) listed above. If you are not the intended recipient(s) for the delivery of this transmittal, you are hereby notified that any unauthorized distribution or copying of this transmittal is prohibited. If you have received this transmittal in error, please notify me at (+1) 202-833-1281.

*“(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality
nor denied the right to change his nationality.”
Article -15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
1948*

Plight of the Rohingya and Role of Bangladesh

Introduction

The prolonged stay of more than a million Rohingya refugees including children, adolescent, young men and women and octogenarians in make-shift camps in Bangladesh is no doubt a major catastrophe of world dimension, posing continuous social, economic, health, education, cultural and other allied problems. It is a reality that Bangladesh economy simply cannot afford to deal with the prospect of a million Rohingya refugees on its soil and the very prolonged presence of these refugees is no doubt a potential threat to our socio-economic stability. And if unresolved for long, the Rohingya catastrophe, as the international media predicts, might as well become a new hotbed for terrorism and threat to regional peace and stability. The other important dimension is to decipher the root cause behind the Myanmarese genocide, which is the genesis of the Rohingya catastrophe. The last but not the least is to look into the role of the government of Bangladesh and finally to share the views of BNP towards a practical solution to the problem.

Rohingyas facing full-scale genocide

The Rohingya genocide is now universally recognized as the worst human tragedies in recent history. The UN and the international community are laying special emphasis on the catastrophe with more than a million Rohingyas now being housed in Bangladesh and the tragedy still unfolding unabated. More than a million Rohingya have been forcibly displaced in recurring cycles. The latest exodus since 25th August 2017 encompasses some 7, 50, 000 refugees. This is in the wake of unprecedented killing, gang-rape, arson and looting and a premeditated and sustained persecution of the Rohingya population tantamount to ethnic cleansing and genocide. The Myanmar government and the army waged a concerted campaign to evict and wipe out the Rohingyas by any and all means available including genocide. The fundamental thrust following passage of the 1982 Citizenship Act was to deprive the Rohingyas illegally of their citizenship and to deny them ethnicity, identity and residency. This deliberately ignored the well-documented historic reality that the Rohingyas have been residing in the Rakhine State since the 8th Century.

The entire world community termed the mass killing and Myanmar atrocities as ‘genocide.’ The UN and its allied bodies like the UNHCR, the ICC, and many heads of governments, like French President Emmanuel Macron, the Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohammad the Turkish First Lady are to name amongst many others. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres agreed to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and called the action of the Myanmar military against the Rohingyas as "textbook case of ethnic cleansing." Azim Ibrahim, a professor in the Strategic Affairs Institute at the US Army War College and author of "The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide" has described the action against the Rohingyas as a "full-scale genocide". The international human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have also termed it genocide. The US house of representative in a resolution (H.Res.1091) termed the Myanmar atrocities as genocide. The UN Fact Finding Mission in a recent report called repression on the Rohingyas as crimes against humanity.

Rohingya Refugees and the Role of Bangladesh Govt.

The Rohingya genocide and ethnic cleansing concern the Bangladeshis in a manner that many other countries may not fully understand or appreciate. Bangladesh was born in 1971 as a consequence of successful freedom struggle of its people united as a monolith against Bangladesh

Genocide. The plight of the Rohingyas therefore reminds the Bangladeshis of their predicament in 1971. The Rohingya refugees have long been suffering in Rakhine soil and marginalized socially, economically and politically by the Army-led Myanmar Government. They have been subjected to systematic torture in cycles over the decades culminating in 2017 leading to ethnic cleansing.

The crux and root cause of the Rohingya crisis is that the Rohingya community have been denied their civil and political rights in general and their right to citizenship in particular in violation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. Article 15 of UDHR reads as follows:

“(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.”

As per **Article 25 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh**, it is Bangladesh’s Fundamental Principle of State policy to **‘uphold the right of every people freely to determine and build up its own social, economic and political system by ways and means of its free choice’** and to **‘support oppressed people’s throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism, colonialism and racialism.’**

In view of the afore-said constitutional obligation, it is the duty of the government Bangladesh to stand by the oppressed and displaced Rohingya refugees and to expedite and ensure their safe repatriation to Rakhine in line with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 in general and to support their right to citizenship guaranteed under article 15 of the UDHR in particular.

In the given background of constitutional obligations and International Laws, the government of Bangladesh could have addressed Rohingya issue. But to the utter surprise and dismay of the nation, we have witnessed that the current government miserably failed to address the issue in line of the afore-said legal propositions. The BNP regime in 1978 and 1992, in similar case of Rohingya refugee influx, in the spirit of its constitutional obligation and on humanitarian ground had accommodated hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees and subsequently also succeeded to ensure their safe and voluntary return. But Awami League government at least during the first few weeks since 25 August, 2017 flatly denied the helpless and hapless refugees access to Bangladesh which can be seen from the newspaper reports published during the initial few weeks since 25 August, 2017. It is revealed from the news report of the relevant time that-

- The government of Bangladesh initially pursued a policy of denial of access to the refugees and prevented their entry into Bangladesh territory and pushed back many across the border. (Human Rights Watch - August 5, 2018)
- Many of them were pushed back into the Bay of Bengal and across the Naaf River. (The Daily Star - September 13, 2017)
- Being prevented from landing at Bangladesh shore, many boat-full of refugee families including women, children and new born were found helplessly floating in the Bay of Bengal risking their life, but the obstinate government would not allow them shelter. (Relief web - August 31, 2017)
- Bangladesh government incongruously proposed joint military operations with the Myanmar Army against the ARSA in line with the Myanmar Army version. (Dhaka Tribune - August 28, 2017)
- UNHCR expressed its deep concern as the Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) prevented entry of the refugees including the injured. (The Daily Star - January 31, 2017). A BGB official has been quoted by BBC Bangla (28 August, 2017) as saying that they had instruction from the superior authority to thwart all illegal entry into Bangladesh (the Rohingya refugees were thus denied entry at the instance of the government). DG of BGB has also been quoted as saying that although the local administration denied entry, the local residents including the local leaders gave shelters to the Rohingya refugees. (Daily Star - 28 August, 2017)

- The former Bangladesh Human Rights Commission Chairman in a recent statement conceded to the fact that Bangladesh government's initial treatment to the incoming Rohingya refugees was rather 'weak'. (BD News 24.com, August 18, 2019)

It is during this period that the government suffered from vacillation, ambivalence, ad-hoc reaction and sudden volte-face, as opposed to BNP government's constructive, humane, systematic, rational, diplomatic and constitutional approach.

In a short span of 2/3 weeks stream of Rohingya refugees were pouring into the Bangladesh territory. Some two hundred thousand Rohingya refugees already crossed the border this way or other despite negation by the BGB and local law enforcing agencies. At this stage the wave of the Rohingyas was so huge that it was unstoppable and the government had to back out from its original stand due to rising international outcry, and mounting pressure home and abroad to give shelter to the oppressed Rohingya refugees.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a 5 – point proposal in 72nd UNGA in September 2017 where she mentioned, amongst others, for a safe zone at Myanmar which is neither in consonance with Article 25 of our constitution nor does it demonstrates the rights of Rohingya guaranteed under Article 15 of the UDHR.

While the nation and the international community was way ahead with their concern taking cognizance of the gravity and seriousness of the issue, the Prime Minister has been found making a ceremonial statement in the UN General Assembly without any effective follow-up to achieve any positive outcome. Instead they were busy capitalizing on the Rohingya issue to cover up the global negative impression about the questionable and voter-less fraud election of 2014.

On 23 November, 2017 Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a Repatriation Deal in an environment of mounting concern over the repatriation climate and safety of returnees. It was not clear as to how the Agreement, which was negotiated behind closed doors, was reached. However it was crystal clear to many that the deal was primarily a public relations exercise in the face of strong possibility that charge of genocide/ethnic cleansing could be brought against the Myanmar leaders.

It was decided that refugee return would be completed within two years of the commencement of repatriation and that verification and repatriation will be based on considering the family as a unit (the proposal was imposed precipitately on Bangladesh). They also finalized the verification form behind the back of the Rohingya refugees. Thus, the entire bilateral deal is found to be deceptive, misleading and frustrating.

Role of BNP and Immediate Reaction, Home and Abroad

Though staying overseas for treatment, Begum Khaleda Zia, BNP Chairperson, rose to the occasion in this crucial juncture and on 28 August 2017 made a clarion call to the government, the local Administration and the law enforcement agencies to give shelter to the helpless Rohingya refugees. This was her constitutional obligation as a responsible citizen and former Prime Minister. She pointed out weak diplomatic maneuvers and failure of the government to appreciate the Rohingya crisis in proper perspective. Begum Zia also recalled our historical friendly relationship with Myanmar and expressed that the displaced Rohingya refugees would soon be repatriated to their homestead back in Rakhine with due security and dignity.

The senior leaders of BNP including Secretary General called upon the government to gear up diplomatic efforts with Myanmar to stop genocide at Myanmar end. They urged upon the government to give refuge to the helpless Rohingya refugees and provide them shelter, proper food and medicare. They called upon the government to forge **national unity** in this time of national crisis to enable the nation to collectively combat the crisis. But the government paid no heed to the call and readily dismissed the unity proposal. At this stage a Myanmar war plane crossed the Bangladesh air and the government even could not protest against the same.

BNP on Rohingya issue organized a round table on 24th September 2017 well attended by the diplomats, academia and members of the civil society, politicians and senior journalists and reiterated its call for national unity referring to its past experience of handling Rohingya crisis, asked the government to recognize the refugees as 'Rohingya refugees' and to ensure their safe repatriation with dignity and due rights. BNP dismissed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's proposal to establish 'Safe Zone' to accommodate the refugees in Rakhine due to uncertainty about their safety and as it would shift the very focus and center point of their demand for Myanmar nationality.

In the said round table it was pointed out by the discussants that it was nearly 14 years ago that BNP had last sent Rohingya refugees back through negotiations. The number of refugees awaiting repatriation was then 23,695 only including new born. Later the Myanmar military went to some low-grade ethnic cleansing that forced many Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh for their lives on a regular basis. And in this period, the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh quietly jumped to 400,000 when the ruling Awami League government has been sleeping unaware of the human tragedy being staged at Rakhine, till the latest influx started in August 25, 2017. And the figure including the previous ones rose to more than 1100,000.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party from the very beginning pursued humanitarian stand, called for opening the border to give shelter to the helpless Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh territory and to cater for sufficient food, shelter and medicare for them. Many NGOs and local philanthropist organization readily responded to the call. In the meantime relief materials started pouring in at the behest of UN and other international bodies. But the local administration and the ruling party goons messed with the relief operation due to mismanagement. The situation turned chaotic. It is in this background Bangladesh Nationalist Party called upon the government to deploy the Army to handle the relief materials including relief operation. (Daily Star – September 18, 2017). The party also stood by the distressed Rohingya refugees and sent truckloads of relief materials under the guidance of senior leaders. The Doctor's Association of Bangladesh (DAB), an allied organization of BNP, however, continued medical centre at Rohingya refugee camp for months and extended medicare to thousands of sick refugees that earned humanitarian good name for them. BNP personnel also continued relief operation in the camps individually and in groups as per convenience.

On her return to Bangladesh after overseas medical treatment, Begum Khaleda Zia immediately rushed on 30 October, 2017 to see for herself the Rohingya refugees at different camps at Cox's bazar. But her motorcade was obstructed and some vehicles vandalized in many places including Feni. The ruling government indulged in dirty politics even with her humanitarian relief operation. Begum Zia, ultimately, visited the camps, distributed relief materials and she herself talked to the refugees to learn about their plight directly from the victim.

Major Rohingya Influxes in 1978 and 1992: Role of the-then Government Headed by BNP

The Myanmar military first tried to push the Rohingyas en masse into Bangladesh in 1978 by the most brutal means imaginable. In no time, a quarter million Rohingyas fled into Bangladesh for their lives. The nature of the brutalities and international reaction to these made the Myanmar military defensive. The BNP government successfully negotiated an agreement with the Myanmar under which almost all the Rohingyas went back under UN supervision. In 1992, when the BNP was in office, another major Rohingya influx occurred; this time also BNP government was able to negotiate and send back 2,36,000 Rohingyas back homes. In 2005, the BNP government again sent back 33,000 Rohingyas, which was the last official repatriation of Rohingyas.

In comparison to the present government's vacillating stance, the BNP government in 1978 and in 1992 successfully negotiated the return of the bulk of the refugee influx into Bangladesh, some 250,000 in each instance. The respective agreements reached with Myanmar included safe and voluntary return. The highlights of the agreement are as follows:

- Both Agreements had specific elements indicating that Myanmar recognized the Rohingya minority as lawful residents. They were referred to as Myanmar residents and members of Myanmar society.
- The repatriation took place under UN supervision.

On the other hand the present Awami government has utterly failed to repatriate so far any of the Rohingya refugees back to Rakhine because of its carelessness and miserable diplomatic failure.

The Genesis of the Rohingya Genocide and Myanmar Policy

The genesis of the Rohingya problem would reveal that the Myanmar has based its case against the Rohingyas on a criminal distortion of history that it was able to sell too many in the outside world because Bangladesh made no national effort to expose the preposterous historical distortion of the genesis of Rohingyas.

Myanmar's narrative is that Rohingyas are Bangladeshis from Chittagong and that Myanmar was merely sending back the "illegal" immigrants. But history is quite the contrary to the Myanmar narrative. The Rohingyas had lived in the Arakan for many hundreds of years since the 8th century. It was only in 1784 that the Arakan/Rakhine first came under Burma when its Barman Buddhist Kings annexed it, as the Mughal rule in India of which the Arakan was a part, was crumbling. Arakan was an extension of the Mughal India both geographically and culturally.

Historically, the Barmars that constitute 68% of Myanmar's population are known for their cruelty that was evident during the Second World War, when they along with the Japanese Army, terrorized the population of the region. It was during their 4 decades' rule of the Arakan region that hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas fled to greater Chittagong for their lives and had settled there. When the British captured Arakan in 1826, it decided not to disturb the status quo that meant that the Buddhists were allowed to carry out low-level ethnic cleansing; the flow of Rohingyas to greater Chittagong did not stop even under the British. The fate of Rohingyas worsened when the British decided to sever Burma from British India, although there was a brief period of hope between 1948 when Burma became independent and 1962 when General Ne Win staged the military coup.

While the British ruled Burma as a colony they recognized all the ethnic groups, (a total of over 30 that lived in British Burma), as Burmese citizens and through Burmese Citizenship Law, 1947, Burmese citizenship was legally endowed upon them. The Rohingyas were one of these 30 plus ethnic groups that the Law recognized for grant of Burmese citizenship. This is how, upon its independence, the Government of Burma had recognized the Rohingyas as Burmese citizens and bestowed upon them Burmese citizenship.

The Burmese Citizenship Law of 1947 by implication recognized that the Rohingyas were a legal ethnic minority in Rakhine or Arakan. But the fate of the Rohingyas changed for the worst with General Ne Win's 1962 military coup and with his program styled "Burmese road to socialism." The General and the military made full use of the Theravada sect to which Burmese Buddhists belong. Theravada Buddhism does not recognize Dalai Lama as the Head of worldwide Buddhism. It pursued militant Buddhist nationalism that let loose hate campaign against the Rohingyas in Rakhine and systematically made the Rohingyas scapegoat for any government failure or untoward incident in Rakhine, as a pretext to torture the Rohingyas to evict them from their territory.

The Ne Win Government passed in 1974 the Emergency Immigration Act under which Rohingyas were stripped of their citizenship. In 1982, Myanmar passed citizenship law under which it made the Rohingyas stateless and openly called them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Simultaneously it enacted domestic laws that ensured that the Rohingyas would eventually leave Myanmar for their own good and if they were not prepared to do so voluntarily, they would be wiped out through genocide and systematic ethnic cleansing.

It is evident that Myanmar's three-fold policy has been solidly consistent. First, its unrelenting persecution continues. The rise of Bamar Buddhist nationalism embraced by political leaders and the army in full earnest, contributed to a genocidal hate campaign against the predominantly Rohingya. Second, its outright denial of any wrong doing behind the claim that it was waging a campaign against terrorist attacks on police stations. It squarely blamed the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) for these attacks. Third, it has placed systematic obstacles against any neutral probe of the atrocities committed. Leaders mocked accusations of arson and mass murder as a huge "iceberg of misinformation" and reports of gang rapes as "fake news".

Aung San Suu Kyi disappoints the world

After long silence, to the utter disappointment of peace loving world community, the Noble Laureate Aung came out of the veil and set up the Kofi Anan Commission to find out why the exodus has taken place! And she promised Myanmar would take back refugees after verification.

The Kofi Anan Report

The Kofi Anan Commission of late seems to have been drawing world attention. However Chairman of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission U Win Mra, who happens to be a member of the Kofi Anan Commission, recently commented that acknowledging Rohingyas as Myanmar citizen is conflicting with the existing Myanmar law. U Win Mra also claimed that the environment in Rakhine in the meantime has further improved which is in reality untrue. (the situation in Rakhine rather worsened as will be dealt with in subsequent chapters). (South Asian journal- August 22, 2019)

Unless resolved on priority basis, the Rohingya crisis could poise Bangladesh to become next hot-bed of unrest and instability

Though the presence of Islamic terrorists among Rohingyas has been the Myanmar narrative to justify its actions without justification, the Rohingya catastrophe unless resolved has the same potentials of breeding terrorism. In addition, unless resolved, the Myanmar military would make sure that the remaining Rohingyas still staying in Rakhine in horrible condition, would eventually be forced out to Bangladesh. Which would be no doubt very fatal for Bangladesh and add fuel to the flame. The world would like to see that further genocide in Rakhine be stopped and the Rohingya refugees get back homes at Rakhine with Myanmar citizenship under comprehensive security with their right to life and property and normal peaceful social life. Else, this region is poised to become next hot-bed of unrest and instability.

Rohingya Crisis and the Global Reaction

In the meantime the crisis started catching attention of the international community due to proactive social media and international media. The nation witnessed how the First Lady of Turkey, the Turkish Foreign Minister, the Indonesian Foreign Minister and the Malaysian Foreign Minister in quick succession rushed to the makeshift Rohingya camps which were coming up in between Ukhiya and Teknaf in Bangladesh. They witnessed the miserable plight of the refugees and directly learnt from the victims the horrible stories about the genocide and persecution perpetrated by the Myanmar Army. A public hearing on Myanmar Army atrocities at Rakhine was arranged in Malayasia that documented the minute details of the Rohingya genocide, ethnic cleansing, torture and misdeeds of the Myanmar Army. A mock trial was also held in Kualalampur that further ignited the international attention. When all these events were unfolding across the world, it is a shame that the ruling Awami League Government was till then lagging behind doing nothing to take up the matter in international forum. There after the whole world including many Heads of the governments, the UN high ups and international bodies rushed to the camp.

The fact that Myanmar military regime committed genocide and ethnic cleansing including gang-rape, arson, burning village after village, looting and persecution has been well established across

the world making it primary responsibility of the UN to take international initiative to resolve it under UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crime of Genocide adopted by the UNGA in 1948.

The UN General Assembly discussed the Rohingya crisis at length where most of the countries-signatory to the convention- described the Myanmar atrocities in Rohingya as 'genocide'. UN body also condemned all rights violations in Myanmar in the third committee of the UN General Assembly held in November, 2018 and took a resolution calling for an independent investigation into them to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. The Assembly also advocated international support for the underfunded 2018 joint response plan for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis.

The UN General Assembly adopted the Human Rights Council's Recommendations from September 2017 for the establishment of an independent mechanism which is mandated to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyze evidence of the most serious international crimes committed by Myanmar since 2011 and "to prepare file... to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings should criminal tribunal on Myanmar's international crimes against Rohingya people eventually materialize."

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is holding investigation into Myanmar's 2017 military crackdown and crimes against Rohingya including killings and forced deportation that compelled more than 700,000 people flee into neighboring Bangladesh. Though Myanmar is not a signatory to the ICC, the court still has jurisdiction over crimes against the Rohingyas because Bangladesh, where they have taken shelter, is a member. UN investigators have separately called for prosecution of top Myanmar Generals for genocide. In 2018 the UN independent investigators said top military commanders in Myanmar should be investigated and prosecuted under international law for the gravest crime against civilians including genocide. On 5th July 2019 the Presidency of the ICC created the pre-trial Chamber 111 after the ICC prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, notified judges that she will seek an authorization, "to investigate alleged crimes within the court's jurisdiction in which at least one element occurred on the territory of the People's Republic of Bangladesh... as well as any other crimes which are sufficiently linked to these events." Those alleged crimes include the crime of deportation.

A UN International Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar in its recent report stated that many sexual and gender based acts of violence committed by Myanmar military against the Rohingyas amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The report describes how the soldiers routinely and systematically employed rape, gang rape and other violent and forced sexual acts against women, girls, boys, men and trans-gender people in blatant violation of international human rights laws. Marzuki Darusman, Chair of the Mission said 'the international community must hold the Myanmar military to account for the tremendous pain and suffering it has inflicted on persons of all genders across the country.' The mission calls upon the UN Security Council and the international community to make accountability for these grave crimes an urgent priority. With hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees still in Bangladesh, too fearful to return home, the report should serve as an important reminder of the need for accountability of perpetrators and justice for victims, the report said.

The UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution in September, 2018 that includes establishment of an evidence gathering mechanism called the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM). This channel presents a means of collecting vital information for future trials.

United Nations Investigators have identified scores of companies having business with the Myanmar Army that controls vast swathes of Myanmar economy through holding firms and their subsidiaries and is accused by the UN of executing a campaign with 'genocidal intent' against the Rohingya minorities. The UN urged sanctions on Myanmar Army businesses and companies linked to the Army business for their complicity in international crimes. The revenue generated by such businesses, the investigators stated, strengthens the army's autonomy from civilian oversight and provides financial support for their ugly operation of crimes against humanity.

The OIC at its 14th Islamic Summit Conference held in Mecca announced that Gambia, the Chair of the Ministerial Committee of the OIC on Rohingya issue will be filing a legal challenge at the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** for Myanmar's flagrant violation of its obligation to 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment on the Crime of Genocide, which Myanmar signed and ratified in 1956.

In September 2018 the Canadian parliament unanimously adopted a motion that endorsed the findings of the IFFM that concluded that crimes against humanity have been committed against Rohingyas and other ethnic minorities in Myanmar. Canada is likely to initiate legal proceedings before the ICJ with regards to Myanmar's breach of the genocide convention.

US sanctions on Myanmar's senior military officers

The United States is the first government to publicly announce sanctions against the Myanmar military commander in chief Min Aung Hlaing and other senior army officials and their families, who it said were responsible for extra judicial killing of Rohingyas and on reports based on credible information of these commanders involvement in gross violation of human rights. The sanctions include barring them and their family members from entry into the United States and forfeiture of their wealth in the US.

Besides as an international pressure on Myanmar, the **European Union, Australia and Canada** have also imposed sanction on senior military officers including Commander- in Chief of Myanmar army. The EU has also been considering stripping the country of tariff-free access to the world's largest trading block. The UN has commented that Myanmar's top Army generals should be prosecuted for genocide and the ICC has begun its probe leading to the trial. All these move have been highly appreciated which created great pressure on Myanmar.

The Bangladesh- Myanmar Closed Door Repatriation Deal of 23 November, 2017

On 23 November, 2017 Bangladesh and Myanmar, within three months of the unfolding Rohingya crisis, hurriedly signed a Repatriation Deal in an environment of mounting concern over the repatriation climate and safety of returnees. In the Joint Working Group meeting held on 15-16 January, 2018, the two sides signed the Text of Physical Arrangement deciding (1) The refugee return would be completed within two years of the commencement of repatriation and (2) That verification and repatriation will be based on considering the family as a unit (the proposal was imposed precipitately on Bangladesh) they also finalized the verification form unilaterally. **It was not clear as to how the Agreement, which was negotiated behind closed doors, was reached.** However it was crystal clear to many that the deal was primarily a public relations exercise in the face of strong possibility that charge of genocide/ethnic cleansing could be brought against the Myanmar leaders. Reactions across the globe strongly criticized the Repatriation deal as having critical flaws. As for example:-

- ❖ It rejected outright, Bangladesh-Myanmar announcement of their decision to repatriate all Rohingya refugees within two years as illegal, premature and too risky.
- ❖ Both Bangladesh and Myanmar were castigated for agreeing to a deal to repatriate Refugees with **absolutely no guarantees for their safety** and the fact that once repatriated they would be put into holding camps which were in effect concentration camps.
- ❖ The main issue for strong criticism **was that no consultations were held with two critical parties (i) the refugees themselves and (ii) UNHCR**
- ❖ The plan constituted in effect forcible repatriation. The concerns and fears of the refugees were left out as if they were an inert mass of people. Crucial points highlighted were the following:
 - ✚ Potential return of 700,000 refugees within 2 years was a matter of grave concern without clear understanding of their legal status, interim and final destination and whether they volunteered to return. Plans were made ignoring their involvement, determining their safety, security and access to fundamental rights. The time-period was not enough not only for readying physical

infrastructure but even more so for the creation of a congenial and confidence building environment.

- ✦ There was no guarantee of citizenship or move to amend the controversial 1982 Citizenship law which denies free movement and other basic rights. Without resolving core issues of citizenship and ethnicity and the return to their homes and property going back would be a great risk of a quick return and all its consequences. Myanmar should address these issues
- ✦ It was necessary to set up a monitoring mechanism to oversee the return of people.
- ✦ Refugees were not yet ready to return. The passage of time was a crucial factor to overcome the trust deficit. The responsibilities of all concerned had to be carefully worked out (i) Bangladesh to house refugees for some time (ii) Myanmar to create an environment to ensure confidence and fundamental rights and (iii) the international community to ensure sustainable conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified return.
- ✦ In sum any deal to repatriate the Rohingya refugees must have:
 - ✓ UNHCR as a pivotal party in the arrangements
 - ✓ Myanmar's commitment to recognize ethnicity claims, full citizenship, respect for human rights, security, freedom of movement
 - ✓ Voluntary, safe and dignified return
 - ✓ Refugees must return to their original homes and not camps.

In the eight months that have elapsed since the latest mass exodus of refugees (700,000), Myanmar has done nothing tangible to further the implementation of the Repatriation deal of 23 November, 2017 or to demonstrate that this is not another public relations ploy. On the contrary its actions have progressively hardened the belief that its intent remains ethnic cleansing and genocide. Latest developments support this conclusion:

- Myanmar has deployed troops near the Bangladesh border where Rohingya's took shelter. They have dubbed this large-scale mobilization "anti-terror operations".
- Myanmar has moved ethnic Rakhine Buddhists to occupy Rohingya villages bulldozed by their security forces.
- They have verified less than 600 returnees. It is crystal clear that the likelihood of fulfilling the criteria of verification with control firmly in the Myanmar hand will be severely contained.
- More ominous is new evidence surfacing that Myanmar in defiance of the Repatriation deal continues its massacres and atrocities. The following instances have been chronicled:

Deceptive and Eye-Wash effort by Myanmar and Bangladesh governments for repatriation of Rohingya and their blatant failure:

The Myanmar and Bangladesh governments had been continuously trying to establish that the Rohingya crisis is a bilateral issue and as such they had entered into closed-door repatriation agreement on 23 November, 2017. It is the BNP that has been calling upon to resolve the issue on consultation with all political parties of the country and with the stakeholders home and abroad. BNP from its previous successful resolution of the Rohingya crisis in 1978 and 1992 had urged the government to follow the foot-print of the previous agreements which were signed between the two countries under the supervision of UNHCR. On the other hand the government of Bangladesh did not pay any heed to BNP's call; rather the government has frustrated and disappointed the world community in dealing with the matter and repatriating the Rohingya refugees. Consequently Bangladesh is to take the burden of the largest refugee community risking its national security. While the entire international community has come forward with their bleeding heart and support for the repressed Rohingya, the government has utterly failed to appreciate their feelings and efforts by

labeling the Rohingya crisis a bilateral issue. As a result of such ambivalent dealings of the government, the negotiation efforts have been proved futile and the repatriation process has become uncertain. On the other hand, the Myanmar government following signing of the agreement, has been continuously committing the same offence in Myanmar like genocide and crime against humanity. The following examples, amongst others, could be cited:-

- ❖ **The GU DAR PYIN Massacre of 27 August, 2017.**
Associated Press (AP) in a Report on 18 February, 2018 revealed the results of an exclusive investigation that revealed large scale slaughter by the army and Buddhist nationalists of some 400 Rohingyas buried in 5 mass graves after having their faces defaced with acid.
- ❖ **The INN DINN Massacre of 2 September, 2017**
The Myanmar army in a rare instance of self-confession admitted its soldiers had murdered 10 Rohingyas whose bodies were found in a mass grave discovered by two Myanmar journalists who now face charges of treason. Reuters in a recent report on 10 February, 2018 exposed details of the murder and the chain of custody involving the military, police force, local Buddhist villagers in the premeditated murder.
- ❖ **MEDICIN SANS FRONTIER Report of 11 March, 2018**
This was entitled “No one Left” and said that at least 9425 (including 1000 children) died in the first month of clearance operations in the early hours of 25 August, 2017. In a wave of unprecedented brutality estimated numbers of dead range from 9425 to 13,759.
- ❖ **Militarization of Rohingya villages**
An Amnesty International Report compiled on 10.2.2018 on the continuing campaign against the Rohingyas **still remaining in Myanmar** showed that they are facing starvation, rape and sexual violence. It concluded that the same fate awaits returnees. In a new briefing entitled “REMAKING RAKHINE STATE” Amnesty International said that eyewitnesses and satellite imagery found that flattening Rohingya villages and new construction have intensified since **January 2018**, in the areas where hundreds of thousands fled the military campaign of ethnic cleansing. New roads and structures are being built in burnt out Rohingya villages and new bases are being erected to house security forces in a dramatic land grab.

In spite of all these, the two repatriation attempts on 15 November 2017 and 22nd August 2019 met utter failure in as much as not a single Rohingya refugee agreed to go back to Rakhine mainly for fear of life and security. They have repeatedly demanded their Myanmar citizenship and their right to life and security that remained unaddressed by the Myanmar authority. On the eve of the recent repatriation effort, the Rohingya refugees staged demonstration agitating through a mammoth gathering on 25 August, 2019. Recently, they also circulated leaflets reducing their demands in 5 – points which are as follows:

- (1). The parliament must pass a law acknowledging that the Rohingyas were local people as they were permanent residents in Rakhine; (2). The Rohingyas in Rakhine must be given citizenship and ID cards; (3). The Rohingyas must be returned to their own villages and their grabbed lands must be returned; (4). UN peace keeping forces must be deployed alongside the Rohingya police force to protect the lives and property of the Rohingyas in Arakan; and (5). The criminals must be tried in the international criminal court rather than the local court in Myanmar. (Prothom Alo- 22 August, 2019)

The reason BNP terms the repatriation agreement deceptive and eye-wash instrument of both the governments is that, in addition to the aforesaid, the Foreign minister of Bangladesh in a recent statement exposed the government’s true color blaming the NGOs and international organizations for their relentless efforts to support the Rohingya refugees. The foreign minister’s negative reaction on the role of NGOs has come at a backdrop when some 61 reputed NGOs home and abroad opined that the environment in Myanmar are not yet conducive to convince the Rohingya refugees to agree to go back home. The government alleged that a number of NGOs were engaged in misleading the refugees not to return to Myanmar. The parliamentary standing committee on the foreign ministry in

the meantime asked the foreign ministry to identify and oversee the activities of the NGOs working on the Rohingya issue and take action against the organizations working against repatriation. The proposed move against the NGOs is considered by many as a mechanism to silence them from speaking on the issue in future. Thus, it appears to BNP that such move of the government is not in consonance with Article 25 of our constitution.

Recommendations from BNP:

In the above premises, BNP strongly feels that this is the high time Bangladesh rather starts to lead than follow, wasting no further time to address the root cause of the Rohingya crisis focusing specially on their right to citizenship and other human rights issues. Bangladesh government has so far miserably failed to take any rigid, transparent and concrete position on Rohingya issue. Being unelected the government could not earn confidence of the friendly countries to negotiate with our friends in the region and across the world. This is high time that the government should come out of ambivalence and take a concrete stand on the issue. Therefore, BNP recommends as follows:

1. The government must treat it as a national crisis and convene a National Dialogue for national unity to arrive at a national consensus. In convening the meeting, the government should disseminate a position-paper bearing in mind the provision of Article 25 of the constitution of Bangladesh and the provisions of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 in general and Article 15 in particular.
2. The government must expedite repatriation of the Rohingya refugees ensuring their human rights, including their right to Myanmar citizenship, proper safety and security, right to property and homestead and freedom of movement. With this object the government should initiate a vigorous global campaign to convince all regional and international friends.
3. BNP feels that for a just and fair cause all our friendly countries who are yet to be on Bangladesh side, should be brought together on board to create mounting pressure on Myanmar, geo-politics should not be in the way in resolving the issue. For the sake of peace, humanity and regional integrity and for union of thoughts and actions, BNP would like to call upon all our friendly countries to support Bangladesh for permanent solution of the Rohingya crisis.
4. Under no circumstances the repatriation should be made from camp to camp i.e. the repatriated Rohingya should be given back their estates so that they may live there without any fear.
5. The government must ensure that the UN oversees the repatriation and the post-repatriation situation in Myanmar.
6. The government should support and assist any proceeding likely to be brought against the perpetrators of Rohingya genocide and crime against humanity.
7. The government must take all necessary steps to prevent any attempt of militancy or terrorism arising out of the Rohingya crisis.
8. The government of Bangladesh must involve the diplomatic mission and other stakeholders concerned with the Rohingya issue, including the Rohingya refugees and Myanmar government, in close coordination with the UN and under UN supervision, for the purpose of effective repatriation and permanent solution of the Rohingya crisis.
9. The government must play smarter and be strategic in pursuing its world diplomacy through vigorous diplomatic interaction with the world powers.

References/ Acknowledgements

1. Bangladesh's initial response to Rohingya crisis was 'weak, disoriented': Ex-NHRC chief,
bdnews24.com, 18 Aug 2019

2. "Bangladesh Is Not My Country"
Human Rights Watch, August 5, 2018

3. ISIS, Al-Qaeda drawn to crisis in Rakhine state
THE STRAITS TIMES , Sep 20, 2017,

4. Bodies of 19 Rohingya Refugees Wash Ashore in Bangladesh
Reliefweb, 31 Aug 2017

5. Rohingya terrorists linked to pro-Pak terror groups in Jammu & Kashmir
THE ECONOMIC TIMES, Updated: Jul 12, 2018,

6. Buddhist nationalism challenges Myanmar's government
NIKKIE, ASIAN REVIEW , August 30, 2017

7. 500,000 Rohingyas waiting to enter Bangladesh
Dhaka Tribune, September 24th, 2018

8. Statelessness and identity in the Rohingya refugee crisis
Humanitarian Practice Network, October 2018

9. Why bilateral initiatives with Myanmar have failed
The Daily Star , December 21, 2018

10. The National Laws of Myanmar: Making of Statelessness for the Rohingya
Wiley Online Library, First published: 08 November 2018

11. PM places five-point proposal at UNGA on Rohingya crisis
Financial Express, Saturday, 23 September 2017

12. Rohingya crisis: BNP opposes PM's safe zone proposal
The Daily Star , September 24, 2017

13. Rohingya crisis: BNP wants Prime Minister to visit countries like India, China
The Daily Sun, 10th September, 2017

14. Myanmar Wants to Track Rohingya, Not Help Them
FP , August 1, 2019,

15. The Face of Buddhist Terror
TIME, July 1, 2013

16. It only takes one terrorist': the Buddhist monk who reviles Myanmar's Muslims
The Guardian, Fri 12 May 2017 14.46 BST Last modified on Wed 2 May 2018

17. Rohingya Crisis: Why Aung San Suu Kyi is disappointing the world
Morocco World News Sep 13, 2017

18. From peace icon to pariah: Aung San Suu Kyi's fall from grace

The Guardian, Fri 23 Nov 2018

19. Burmese daze Aung San Suu Kyi is letting her own revolution down

The Economist, Mar 30th 2017

20. "Rohingya refugee crisis is a time bomb that must be quickly defused to avoid any future flare-up"

The Daily Star, August 05, 2019

21. Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis

BBC News, 24 April 2018

22. Reuters journalists jailed in Myanmar over secrets act

BBC News, 3 September 2018

23. UN investigator: US sanctions on Myanmar military leaders inadequate

Dhaka Tribune, July 19th, 2019

24. Rohingya crisis: Finding out the truth about Arsa militants

BBC News, 11 October 2017

25. Rohingya crisis: Are Suu Kyi's Rohingya claims correct?

BBC News, 19 September 2017

26. Rohingya Muslims: Tales of horror from Myanmar

BBC News, 7 September 2017

27. Myanmar's Rohingya: Truth, lies and Aung San Suu Kyi

BBC News, 27 January 2017

28. WORDS MATTER

A brief history of the word "Rohingya" at the heart of a humanitarian crisis

QUARTZ, October 3, 2017

29. Myanmar conflict: Fake photos inflame tension

BBC News, 2 September 2017

30. Myanmar: Who are the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army?

BBC News, 6 September 2017

31. Hounded and ridiculed for complaining of rape

BBC News, 11 March 2017

32. Aung San Suu Kyi: No ethnic cleansing of Myanmar Muslim minority

BBC News, 6 April 2017

33. Rohingya villages 'destroyed' in Myanmar, images show

BBC News, 21 November 2016

34. Myanmar army fires on Rohingya villages in Rakhine region

BBC News, 13 November 2016

35. Rohingya Crisis: Violence drives more to Bangladesh

UN Information Center Washington, Nov 28, 2017,

36. Aung San Suu Kyi: The democracy icon who fell from grace

BBC News, 13 September 2018

37. "The Rohingya Amongst Us": Bangladeshi Perspectives on the Rohingya Crisis Survey

[Xchange Foundation](#), August 28, 2018

38. Asia migrants: What do those in the region think should be done?

BBC News, 24 May 2015

39. [Massacre in Myanmar](#)

REUTERS, Feb. 8, 2018,

40. The country where Facebook posts whipped up hate

BBC News, 12 September 2018

41. Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar Is 'Ethnic Cleansing,' U.N. Rights Chief Says

The New York Times, Sept. 11, 2017

42. House approves resolution calling persecution of Myanmar Muslims a 'genocide,' in contrast with Trump's silence

The Washington Post, December 13, 2018

43. Give shelter to Rohingyas, Khaleda to govt

The Daily Star , August 28, 2017

44. Rohingyas must return, onus on Myanmar to convince: government

NEW AGE, Aug 25 , 2019

45. Myanmar should be pressured for safe Rohingya repatriation: US

NEW AGE, Aug 25, 2019

46. Distrust holds them back

The Daily Star, August 23, 2019

47. 61 NGOs warn of worsening crisis in Myanmar, call for refugees' engagement on safe, voluntary returns

International Rescue Committee, August 20, 2019

48. Rohingyas reluctant to return

Prothom Alo, Aug 22, 2019

49. Repatriation of Rohingyas: Evidence of Myanmar's lack of preparedness

The Daily star, April 8, 2019

50. UN resolution slams Myanmar over rights violations

UCAN, March 25, 2019

51. Myanmar probe team on Rohingya abuse in Dhaka

Dhaka Tribune , August 18th, 2019

52. International legal options for addressing the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar and humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh

Reliefweb, 13 Aug 2019

53. Rohingya Crisis: ICC lawyer seeks probe into atrocities

The Daily star , June 27, 2019

54. ICC says it can prosecute Myanmar for alleged Rohingya crimes

The Guardian, 6 Sep 2018

55. Myanmar's 'Genocidal Acts' Demand UN Action

The Diplomat, October 26, 2018

56. Rohingya Abuses: US sanctions on Myanmar army chief, 3 top officers

The Daily Star, July 18, 2019

57. Myanmar/Burma: Council prolongs sanctions

Council of the EU, 29/04/2019

58. ICC seeks views from victims

The Daily Star, August 20, 2019

59. China's changed policy on Rohingya refugees

FRONTLINE , August 16, 2019

60. AHA Centre defends leaked report on Rohingya refugees

CNA, 10 Jun 2019

61. China for quick solution to Rohingya crisis

The Daily Sun, 6 July, 2019

62 . UNHCR talks to Rohingyas cleared for repatriation

The Daily Star . August 21, 2019

63. U.N. Security Council mulls Myanmar action; Russia, China boycott talks

Reuters, December 18, 2018

64. Exodus of refugees turns fatal

The Daily Star , September 13, 2017

65. Bangladesh offers Myanmar joint operations against insurgents

Dhaka Tribune August 28th, 2017

66. Rohingyas repatriation ensured how about human rights
South Asian journal- August 22, 2019

Jeremiah Baronberg

From: Jeremiah Baronberg
Sent: Thursday, August 1, 2019 12:18 PM
To: Jeremiah Baronberg
Subject: Topline News on Bangladesh / August 1, 2019

Topline News on Bangladesh / August 1, 2019

The [deterioration of democracy](#) in Bangladesh continues unabated, following the country's national election last year that was deemed [not free or fair](#) by the United States and the global community.

Most recently, Bangladesh's politicized high court rejected the [bail petition](#) of the country's former prime minister who has been languishing in jail under [politically motivated](#) charges. Khaleda Zia's continued imprisonment and confinement is in direct violation of fundamental and legal rights guaranteed by Bangladesh's Constitution.

As you continue to follow these issues, please see the below updates on the dire circumstances people in Bangladesh face:

Human rights organizations are reporting that "Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies have used systematic torture on detainees to stifle dissent" and urged Bangladesh to "implement the recommendations made by the United Nations Committee against Torture to end the widespread practice of torture in the country."

- [Rights group accuses Bangladesh of torture; government says report baseless](#), Reuters
 - [Cycle of Fear: Combatting Impunity for Torture and Strengthening the Rule of Law in Bangladesh](#), [World Organisation Against Torture \(OMCT\)](#)
 - [Civil Society Joint Alternative Report on Bangladesh Submitted to the Committee Against Torture, OMCT](#)
- [Bangladesh: Heed UN Recommendations on Torture](#), Human Rights Watch
- [Committee Against Torture Examines the Situation in Bangladesh](#), *United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT)*
 - [Govt questioned over human rights abuses](#), *The Daily Star*

Experts on the region commented that the Bangladesh Government's "reliance on the levers of state to crush the democratic opposition upended hopes for pluralistic democracy in Bangladesh" and urged the international community to "press the Bangladeshi government about arrests under its draconian digital security laws and online censorship that is stifling peaceful criticism and dissent."

- [As Bangladesh buries one dictator, another holds firm](#), *Asia Times*
- [Japan: Urge Bangladesh, Myanmar to Protect Rights](#), *Human Rights Watch*

This material is distributed by Blue Star Strategies on behalf of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Jeremiah Baronberg
Senior Director
Blue Star Strategies, LLC

888 17th Street NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20006

(+1) 202-833-1281 office main

(+1) 202-650-5471 office direct

(+1) 202-822-9088 fax

jeremiah.baronberg@bluestarstrategies.com

www.bluestarstrategies.com/



The information in this transmittal is privileged and confidential and is intended only for the recipient(s) listed above. If you are not the intended recipient(s) for the delivery of this transmittal, you are hereby notified that any unauthorized distribution or copying of this transmittal is prohibited. If you have received this transmittal in error, please notify me at (+1) 202-833-1281.

Jeremiah Baronberg

From: Jeremiah Baronberg
Sent: Thursday, September 5, 2019 2:22 PM
To: Jeremiah Baronberg
Subject: Topline News on Bangladesh / September 5, 2019

Topline News on Bangladesh / September 5, 2019

At this September's annual UN General Assembly in New York, Bangladesh will undoubtedly feature among the discussions and presentations, including with likely focus on the now two-year old—and yet unresolved—Rohingya refugee crisis.

As the Bangladesh Government faces continued censure for its [human rights practices](#), new analysis about its lagging role in the [Rohingya crisis](#) is coming to light.

As you continue to follow these issues, please see the below updates on the dire circumstances people in Bangladesh face:

Increasing scrutiny is falling on the Bangladesh Government for its lagging role in the unresolved Rohingya crisis—with the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party urging the government to take concrete, transparent steps to ensure a just and fair resolution to the crisis.

- [The Complex Context behind Bangladesh's Handling of the Rohingya Crisis](#), *Geopolitical Monitor*
- [Plight of the Rohingya and Role of Bangladesh](#), *Bangladesh Nationalist Party*
- [Two Years of Limbo for the Rohingya](#), *International Policy Digest*
- [Myanmar/Bangladesh: Halt Rohingya Returns](#), *Human Rights Watch*

The Bangladesh Government continues to be censured by the international human rights community, where “increasing cases of enforced disappearances by law enforcement officials” have been met with denials by the government.

- [Enforced Disappearances Met With Denials From Bangladesh](#), *Human Rights Watch*, published in *The Diplomat*

Senior U.S. Government officials visited Bangladesh where they conveyed concerns in a number of areas, including “countering radicalization and recruitment in Bangladesh...and the importance of respecting human rights and the rule of law.”

- [Deputy Coordinator for the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism Visits Bangladesh](#), *U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh*
- [Ambassador-At-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking In Persons Visits Bangladesh](#), *U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh*

This material is distributed by Blue Star Strategies on behalf of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Jeremiah Baronberg
Senior Director
Blue Star Strategies, LLC

888 17th Street NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006

(+1) 202-833-1281 office main

(+1) 202-650-5471 office direct

(+1) 202-822-9088 fax

jeremiah.baronberg@bluestarstrategies.com

www.bluestarstrategies.com/



The information in this transmittal is privileged and confidential and is intended only for the recipient(s) listed above. If you are not the intended recipient(s) for the delivery of this transmittal, you are hereby notified that any unauthorized distribution or copying of this transmittal is prohibited. If you have received this transmittal in error, please notify me at (+1) 202-833-1281.

Jeremiah Baronberg

From: Jeremiah Baronberg
Sent: Tuesday, September 3, 2019 11:20 AM
To: Jeremiah Baronberg
Subject: Topline News on Bangladesh / BNP Statement on Rohingya Crisis / September 3, 2019
Attachments: Plight of the Rohingya and Role of Bangladesh.pdf

Topline News on Bangladesh / BNP Statement on Rohingya Crisis / September 3, 2019

It has been two years since the start of the most recent Rohingya crisis, which has resulted in hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing to—and remaining to this day in—neighboring Bangladesh.

In light of this persistent and unresolved crisis, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has released a new [policy statement and analysis](#) on the “Plight of the Rohingya and Role of Bangladesh.”

The BNP proposes a [set of recommendations](#) to address the root causes of the Rohingya crisis and urges the Bangladesh government to take concrete, transparent steps to ensure a just and fair resolution to the crisis.

To read the full BNP statement, please [click here](#) or see the attached PDF.

This material is distributed by Blue Star Strategies on behalf of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Jeremiah Baronberg
Senior Director
Blue Star Strategies, LLC

888 17th Street NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006

(+1) 202-833-1281 office main
(+1) 202-650-5471 office direct
(+1) 202-822-9088 fax
jeremiah.baronberg@bluestarstrategies.com

www.bluestarstrategies.com/



The information in this transmittal is privileged and confidential and is intended only for the recipient(s) listed above. If you are not the intended recipient(s) for the delivery of this transmittal, you are hereby notified that any unauthorized distribution or copying of this transmittal is prohibited. If you have received this transmittal in error, please notify me at (+1) 202-833-1281.

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable Eliot Engel
Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Rayburn House Office Building, 2170
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Chairman Engel,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir'.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 17 April 2019

The Honorable Lindsey Graham, USAFR (Ret)
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations and Related Programs
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-127
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Foreign Assistance to Bangladesh / Congressional Appropriations

Dear Chairman Graham,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the deterioration of democracy in Bangladesh and to urge Congressional action with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship in the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. As the current ruling Bangladesh government charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional Appropriators to exercise oversight capacity to review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh. It is imperative that Congressional Appropriators exercise this leverage carefully and in a strategic manner aimed at ensuring America's vital national security interests are secured with respect to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy in ways that contribute to the improvement of conditions in Bangladesh, which have been steadily worsening under the current ruling authorities' draconian leadership.

Following Bangladesh's deeply flawed elections in December 2018, the deterioration of democracy in the country continues to draw the attention and ire of the United States and the international community. The U.S. Executive Branch, Armed Forces, and Congress have raised serious concerns regarding the ruling Awami League party's abuse of authority and human rights:

- The State Department's recently-released annual Human Rights Reports included a scathing 50-page entry on Bangladesh. The report notes extensive human rights violations and states that "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters."
- In Senate testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command noted that "Bangladesh's December 30 elections point to (sic) concerning trend of consolidation of power by the ruling Awami League and raise fears that PM Hasina is aiming to achieve a de facto one-party state."

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “supporting democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the Indo-Pacific region is critical to advancing U.S. interests, and reports of widespread irregularities in Bangladesh’s recent elections seriously threaten those important interests.”

Despite these external pressures, the ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Moreover, the Awami League government’s ability to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis has taken a turn for the worse, as the UN recently expressed concerns over the government’s plan to transfer refugees to an offshore island, warning that “ill-planned relocation, and relocations without the consent of the refugees concerned, have the potential to create a new crisis.”

In light of these alarming trends and their associated risks to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, we strongly urge you to consider opportunities to raise questions that review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh—during the U.S. appropriations process.

Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the U.S. appropriations process be leveraged as an effective means for ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance to Bangladesh does not come at the expense of democracy.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 17 April 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building, S-128,
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Foreign Assistance to Bangladesh / Congressional Appropriations

Dear Chairman Shelby,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the deterioration of democracy in Bangladesh and to urge Congressional action with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship in the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. As the current ruling Bangladesh government charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional Appropriators to exercise oversight capacity to review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh. It is imperative that Congressional Appropriators exercise this leverage carefully and in a strategic manner aimed at ensuring America's vital national security interests are secured with respect to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy in ways that contribute to the improvement of conditions in Bangladesh, which have been steadily worsening under the current ruling authorities' draconian leadership.

Following Bangladesh's deeply flawed elections in December 2018, the deterioration of democracy in the country continues to draw the attention and ire of the United States and the international community. The U.S. Executive Branch, Armed Forces, and Congress have raised serious concerns regarding the ruling Awami League party's abuse of authority and human rights:

- The State Department's recently-released annual Human Rights Reports included a scathing 50-page entry on Bangladesh. The report notes extensive human rights violations and states that "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters."
- In Senate testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command noted that "Bangladesh's December 30 elections point to (sic) concerning trend of consolidation of power by the ruling Awami League and raise fears that PM Hasina is aiming to achieve a de facto one-party state."

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “supporting democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the Indo-Pacific region is critical to advancing U.S. interests, and reports of widespread irregularities in Bangladesh’s recent elections seriously threaten those important interests.”

Despite these external pressures, the ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Moreover, the Awami League government’s ability to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis has taken a turn for the worse, as the UN recently expressed concerns over the government’s plan to transfer refugees to an offshore island, warning that “ill-planned relocation, and relocations without the consent of the refugees concerned, have the potential to create a new crisis.”

In light of these alarming trends and their associated risks to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, we strongly urge you to consider opportunities to raise questions that review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh—during the U.S. appropriations process.

Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the U.S. appropriations process be leveraged as an effective means for ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance to Bangladesh does not come at the expense of democracy.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable James Risch
Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-423
Washington, DC 20510-6225

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Chairman Risch,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir', is written over a horizontal line.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable Mitt Romney
Chairman, Senate Subcommittee On Near East, South Asia,
Central Asia, And Counterterrorism
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-423
Washington, DC 20510-6225

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Chairman Romney,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir'.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable Brad Sherman
Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the
Pacific, and Nonproliferation
Rayburn House Office Building, 2170
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Chairman Sherman,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir'.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 17 April 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
And Related Programs
Capitol Building, H-307
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Foreign Assistance to Bangladesh / Congressional Appropriations

Dear Chairwoman Lowey,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the deterioration of democracy in Bangladesh and to urge Congressional action with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship in the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. As the current ruling Bangladesh government charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional Appropriators to exercise oversight capacity to review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh. It is imperative that Congressional Appropriators exercise this leverage carefully and in a strategic manner aimed at ensuring America's vital national security interests are secured with respect to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy in ways that contribute to the improvement of conditions in Bangladesh, which have been steadily worsening under the current ruling authorities' draconian leadership.

Following Bangladesh's deeply flawed elections in December 2018, the deterioration of democracy in the country continues to draw the attention and ire of the United States and the international community. The U.S. Executive Branch, Armed Forces, and Congress have raised serious concerns regarding the ruling Awami League party's abuse of authority and human rights:

- The State Department's recently-released annual Human Rights Reports included a scathing 50-page entry on Bangladesh. The report notes extensive human rights violations and states that "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters."
- In Senate testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command noted that "Bangladesh's December 30 elections point to (sic) concerning trend of consolidation of power by the ruling Awami League and raise fears that PM Hasina is aiming to achieve a de facto one-party state."

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “supporting democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the Indo-Pacific region is critical to advancing U.S. interests, and reports of widespread irregularities in Bangladesh’s recent elections seriously threaten those important interests.”

Despite these external pressures, the ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Moreover, the Awami League government’s ability to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis has taken a turn for the worse, as the UN recently expressed concerns over the government’s plan to transfer refugees to an offshore island, warning that “ill-planned relocation, and relocations without the consent of the refugees concerned, have the potential to create a new crisis.”

In light of these alarming trends and their associated risks to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, we strongly urge you to consider opportunities to raise questions that review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh—during the U.S. appropriations process.

Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the U.S. appropriations process be leveraged as an effective means for ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance to Bangladesh does not come at the expense of democracy.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 17 April 2019

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on
State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs
Capitol Building, HT-2
Washington, DC 20515-6021

Subject: Foreign Assistance to Bangladesh / Congressional Appropriations

Dear Ranking Member Rogers,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the deterioration of democracy in Bangladesh and to urge Congressional action with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship in the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. As the current ruling Bangladesh government charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional Appropriators to exercise oversight capacity to review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh. It is imperative that Congressional Appropriators exercise this leverage carefully and in a strategic manner aimed at ensuring America's vital national security interests are secured with respect to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy in ways that contribute to the improvement of conditions in Bangladesh, which have been steadily worsening under the current ruling authorities' draconian leadership.

Following Bangladesh's deeply flawed elections in December 2018, the deterioration of democracy in the country continues to draw the attention and ire of the United States and the international community. The U.S. Executive Branch, Armed Forces, and Congress have raised serious concerns regarding the ruling Awami League party's abuse of authority and human rights:

- The State Department's recently-released annual Human Rights Reports included a scathing 50-page entry on Bangladesh. The report notes extensive human rights violations and states that "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters."
- In Senate testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command noted that "Bangladesh's December 30 elections point to (sic) concerning trend of consolidation of power by the ruling Awami League and raise fears that PM Hasina is aiming to achieve a de facto one-party state."

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “supporting democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the Indo-Pacific region is critical to advancing U.S. interests, and reports of widespread irregularities in Bangladesh’s recent elections seriously threaten those important interests.”

Despite these external pressures, the ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Moreover, the Awami League government’s ability to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis has taken a turn for the worse, as the UN recently expressed concerns over the government’s plan to transfer refugees to an offshore island, warning that “ill-planned relocation, and relocations without the consent of the refugees concerned, have the potential to create a new crisis.”

In light of these alarming trends and their associated risks to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, we strongly urge you to consider opportunities to raise questions that review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh—during the U.S. appropriations process.

Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the U.S. appropriations process be leveraged as an effective means for ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance to Bangladesh does not come at the expense of democracy.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 17 April 2019

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building, H-307
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Foreign Assistance to Bangladesh / Congressional Appropriations

Dear Ranking Member Granger,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the deterioration of democracy in Bangladesh and to urge Congressional action with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship in the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. As the current ruling Bangladesh government charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional Appropriators to exercise oversight capacity to review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh. It is imperative that Congressional Appropriators exercise this leverage carefully and in a strategic manner aimed at ensuring America's vital national security interests are secured with respect to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy in ways that contribute to the improvement of conditions in Bangladesh, which have been steadily worsening under the current ruling authorities' draconian leadership.

Following Bangladesh's deeply flawed elections in December 2018, the deterioration of democracy in the country continues to draw the attention and ire of the United States and the international community. The U.S. Executive Branch, Armed Forces, and Congress have raised serious concerns regarding the ruling Awami League party's abuse of authority and human rights:

- The State Department's recently-released annual Human Rights Reports included a scathing 50-page entry on Bangladesh. The report notes extensive human rights violations and states that "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters."
- In Senate testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command noted that "Bangladesh's December 30 elections point to (sic) concerning trend of consolidation of power by the ruling Awami League and raise fears that PM Hasina is aiming to achieve a de facto one-party state."

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “supporting democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the Indo-Pacific region is critical to advancing U.S. interests, and reports of widespread irregularities in Bangladesh’s recent elections seriously threaten those important interests.”

Despite these external pressures, the ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Moreover, the Awami League government’s ability to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis has taken a turn for the worse, as the UN recently expressed concerns over the government’s plan to transfer refugees to an offshore island, warning that “ill-planned relocation, and relocations without the consent of the refugees concerned, have the potential to create a new crisis.”

In light of these alarming trends and their associated risks to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, we strongly urge you to consider opportunities to raise questions that review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh—during the U.S. appropriations process.

Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the U.S. appropriations process be leveraged as an effective means for ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance to Bangladesh does not come at the expense of democracy.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Ranking Minority Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Rayburn House Office Building, 2170
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Ranking Member McCaul,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir'.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable Bob Menendez
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-423
Washington, DC-20510-6225

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Ranking Member Menendez,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir', is written over a horizontal line.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable Chris Murphy
Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee On Near East,
South Asia, Central Asia, And Counterterrorism
Dirksen Senate Office Building, SD-423
Washington, DC 20510-6225

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Ranking Member Murphy,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir'.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 24 April 2019

The Honorable Ted Yoho
Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on
Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation
Rayburn House Office Building, 2170
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Bangladesh Election Investigation

Dear Ranking Member Yoho,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the importance of an independent investigation to examine widespread claims of irregularities in Bangladesh's December 30, 2018 elections—and the lack of any meaningful steps towards achieving this goal. Despite numerous calls by the international community, no such probe has taken place and no plans have been announced for an investigation. As the current ruling party in Bangladesh charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional leaders to raise questions to ensure that international calls for an independent investigation are heeded in the near-term. In the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, support for democracy, rule of law and human rights are critical to advancing U.S. interests, which are threatened by the continued lack of accountability for what was widely seen as a not “free and fair election.”

In the election's aftermath, statements by the international community publicly called for an independent investigation and impartial examination—which recognizing attacks on opposition party members, voter intimidation, vote rigging and ballot stuffing, and partisan behavior by election officials in the pre-election period and on Election Day:

- The United States State Department noted “credible reports of harassment, intimidation, and violence in the pre-election period that made it difficult for many opposition candidates and their supporters to meet, hold rallies, and campaign freely...(and) that election-day irregularities prevented some people from voting, which undermined faith in the electoral process.”
- The State Department's annual Human Rights Report on Bangladesh further stated that “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters.”
- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “Although the government-appointed election commission has claimed the election was legitimate, we believe the allegations of widespread rigging and voter suppression must be taken seriously. According to press accounts, when polls across the country officially opened,

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

reporters found that some ballot boxes looked suspiciously full. There are reports that Awami League activists barred some people from voting, claiming that the polling stations were closed for lunch or had run out of ballots. Some voters were even told their votes had already been cast. To make matters worse, the Government of Bangladesh failed to grant credentials and issue visas to most international election monitors, including those funded by the United States.”

- The European Union stated that “violence has marred the election day, and significant obstacles to a level playing field remained in place throughout the process and have tainted the electoral campaign and the vote. The relevant national authorities should now ensure a proper examination of allegations of irregularities and commit to full transparency in their resolution.”
- The United Kingdom stated that it was “aware of credible accounts of obstacles, including arrests, that constrained or prevented campaigning by opposition parties...(and) urge a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints related to the conduct of the elections.”
- The United Nations urged the Bangladesh authorities to “carry out prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged acts of violence and human rights violations related to the elections with a view to holding accountable those responsible, regardless of their political affiliations.”
- Transparency International and Human Rights Watch chronicled substantive evidence of voter fraud and called for an independent probe into allegations of election abuses, respectively.

Despite these external pressures, the Awami League ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and to continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the United States not be seen as condoning “business as usual” with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship—and insist that international calls for an independent investigation into election irregularities be headed, and implemented, without further delay.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir', is written over a horizontal line.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

Date: 17 April 2019

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice-Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Capitol Building, S-128,
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Foreign Assistance to Bangladesh / Congressional Appropriations

Dear Vice-Chairman Leahy,

Thank you for the opportunity to convey concerns regarding the deterioration of democracy in Bangladesh and to urge Congressional action with respect to the U.S.-Bangladesh bilateral relationship in the context of U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. As the current ruling Bangladesh government charts a path towards authoritarian, one-party rule, we respectfully urge Congressional Appropriators to exercise oversight capacity to review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh. It is imperative that Congressional Appropriators exercise this leverage carefully and in a strategic manner aimed at ensuring America's vital national security interests are secured with respect to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy in ways that contribute to the improvement of conditions in Bangladesh, which have been steadily worsening under the current ruling authorities' draconian leadership.

Following Bangladesh's deeply flawed elections in December 2018, the deterioration of democracy in the country continues to draw the attention and ire of the United States and the international community. The U.S. Executive Branch, Armed Forces, and Congress have raised serious concerns regarding the ruling Awami League party's abuse of authority and human rights:

- The State Department's recently-released annual Human Rights Reports included a scathing 50-page entry on Bangladesh. The report notes extensive human rights violations and states that "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party won a third consecutive five-year term in an improbably lopsided December parliamentary election that was not considered free and fair, and was marred by reported irregularities, including ballot-box stuffing and intimidation of opposition polling agents and voters."
- In Senate testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command noted that "Bangladesh's December 30 elections point to (sic) concerning trend of consolidation of power by the ruling Awami League and raise fears that PM Hasina is aiming to achieve a de facto one-party state."

28/1, V.I.P. ROAD
NAYA PALTAN
DHAKA-1000, BANGLADESH



SECRETARY GENERAL
BANGLADESH NATIONALIST PARTY

- The House Committee on Foreign Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Pompeo calling on the Trump Administration to address threats to democracy in Bangladesh, noting that “supporting democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the Indo-Pacific region is critical to advancing U.S. interests, and reports of widespread irregularities in Bangladesh’s recent elections seriously threaten those important interests.”

Despite these external pressures, the ruling party seems intent to consolidate its rule and continue its crackdown on civil liberties and opposition voices. Moreover, the Awami League government’s ability to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis has taken a turn for the worse, as the UN recently expressed concerns over the government’s plan to transfer refugees to an offshore island, warning that “ill-planned relocation, and relocations without the consent of the refugees concerned, have the potential to create a new crisis.”

In light of these alarming trends and their associated risks to U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, we strongly urge you to consider opportunities to raise questions that review U.S. aid and foreign assistance to Bangladesh—during the U.S. appropriations process.

Because stability in Bangladesh is critical to enduring U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, it is imperative that the U.S. appropriations process be leveraged as an effective means for ensuring that U.S. foreign assistance to Bangladesh does not come at the expense of democracy.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir
Secretary General,
Bangladesh Nationalist Party-BNP

From: [Jeremiah Baronberg](#)
To: [Jeremiah Baronberg](#)
Subject: Topline News on Bangladesh / April 29, 2019
Date: Monday, April 29, 2019 2:53:23 PM
Attachments: [image004.png](#)

Topline News on Bangladesh / April 29, 2019

Since Bangladesh's deeply flawed election in December 2018, the ruling government has deepened its path towards authoritarian, one-party rule. Yet international calls for an independent election investigation and the release of the opposition party's leader from prison have gone unheeded.

In this fraught environment, the international community continues to criticize Bangladesh for its abysmal human rights practices, highlighted by the U.S. State Department's [report](#), which the ruling Awami League party promptly [rejected](#) out of hand. [A new report](#) by the International Federation for Human Rights details "a growing and pervasive climate of fear" in which "Bangladesh's government has used enforced disappearances to silence members of the political opposition and dissenting voices."

As you continue to follow these issues, please see the below updates on the dire circumstances people in Bangladesh face:

New reports highlight enforced disappearances as "part of an ongoing strategy of State-sponsored violence to suppress political opposition and dissent in the country" and other worrisome abductions—implicating senior government officials.

- [Bangladesh: Enforced disappearances amount to crimes against humanity](#), *International Federation for Human Rights*
- [Exclusive: Bangladesh top security adviser accused of abductions](#), *Al Jazeera*
 - [Bangladesh blocks access to Al Jazeera news website](#), *Al Jazeera*

Concerns for the plight of women and girls in Bangladesh were renewed following a young woman's brutal murder—where "sexual harassment and violence are often unreported, victims are intimidated and the legal process is often lengthy."

- [Bangladesh Protesters Demand Justice for Girl Burned to Death After Refusing to Drop Sexual Harassment Charges](#), *AP*
- [Bangladesh: Ensure Justice for Murdered Student](#), *Human Rights Watch*

The government continues its brutal crackdown on free speech—where Bangladesh recently dropped to 150th out of 180 countries in a 2019 annual press freedom index, the lowest ranking it has ever received.

- [Despite Denials, Bangladesh Stifles Free Expression](#), *Human Rights Watch*
 - [Bangladesh: Tougher politics, more press freedom violations](#), *Reporters Sans Frontières*
 - [RSF decries brazen censorship of Bangladeshi news websites](#), *Reporters Sans Frontières*

- [Shahidul Alam: Bangladesh is 'an autocracy by any means', Al Jazeera](#)
- [Despite Prison and Torture, Shahidul Alam Refuses to Stay Quiet](#), The New York Times

This material is distributed by Blue Star Strategies on behalf of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Jeremiah Baronberg
Senior Director
Blue Star Strategies, LLC

888 17th Street NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006

(+1) 202-833-1281 office main
(+1) 202-650-5471 office direct
(+1) 202-822-9088 fax
jeremiah.baronberg@bluestarstrategies.com

www.bluestarstrategies.com/



The information in this transmittal is privileged and confidential and is intended only for the recipient(s) listed above. If you are not the intended recipient(s) for the delivery of this transmittal, you are hereby notified that any unauthorized distribution or copying of this transmittal is prohibited. If you have received this transmittal in error, please notify me at (+1) 202-833-1281.